**The Art of Persuasion in College Athletic Recruiting**

**Introduction:**

College athletic recruiting becomes more competitive each year because athletes have so many colleges and universities to choose from in today’s world. Every year recruiters have to come up with new ideas and persuasion tactics, ethical and unethical, to land the top prospective recruits for their athletic programs. There are a lot of factors that weigh into a recruits final choice of where he or she wants to continue their education and athletics. Verbal and non-verbal Persuasion comes from multiple angles; Family, recruiters, past coaches, media, friends, campus tour guides, recent success of the program, facilities, academics, alumni, predicted amount of playing time, and other athletes are some of the major ones. The process of choosing the best possible college can be a lot to handle for teenagers and young adults. The pressure of signing top recruits can also be stressful on the other side. This stress can cause some people to do unethical and illegal things like giving and receiving gifts, slandering other colleges, creating false accusations through the media, and many other things. Athletics is a big part of revenue for colleges and money can make people do some crazy things. Persuading a top recruit to come play at their college can help them make the big bucks and they sometimes go to extreme measures to make it happen.

**Statement of Problem**:

The college athletic recruiting process can be a dirty game and is the survival of the fittest when it comes to scoring top prospective athletes. The NCAA has rules for athletic recruiting to try and help make the process fair for all colleges and for prospective athletes. College recruiters and coaches have to follow all of these guidelines so that the school doesn’t get receive any infractions or suspensions. There are certain periods where contact with prospects is prohibited or only certain forms of contact with prospects is prohibited.

Over the years there have been many college athletic scandals that have surfaced. Some of the scandals deal with already active college athletes and others deal with athlete recruiting.

**Methods and Findings:**

**Survey**

During my research on the topic of persuasion in the recruiting process of college athletes I conducted a survey of my own. I went around the campus of Central Michigan University, a competitive university with division I athletics in the Mid-American Conference, approaching students at many on-campus buildings and asking them to participate in my primary research. One of the main buildings I conducted research in was the UC, a building that houses the Central Michigan University bookstore, many dining options, and study/conference areas. Another building I conducted research in was the SAC, it is the student activities center that houses weight and training rooms, basketball courts, pool and sauna, and many other things for students to be physically active in. I thought both of these areas would give me a wide variety of non-athlete student opinions on what would be most persuasive to them if they were in the process of choosing the best-fit college to study and play college athletics. The survey results come from 40 different non-athlete students, 20 males and 20 females. I chose non-athlete students because the results of my survey would show a different view on what would most persuade the everyday college student, that likely played some sort of athletics growing up. The survey consisted of three short questions, for the convenience of busy students, but still helped me get the data I needed. The first question asked the survey participant whether they were a male or a female. The second question asked the survey participant whether they were a student, student-athlete, or other. The third question asked the survey participant to rank four different persuasive factors, from 1-4 (1 being most persuasive and 4 being the least persuasive), that would be come into play if they were in the process of choosing between colleges to continue education and athletics. The four different persuasive factors: College Recruiter/Coach, Athletes Parents, Academic Offerings of the School, and Other Athletes/Friends. These four factors were picked for the survey because they are some of the more relevant factors that people hear or think about when it comes to college athletic recruiting. The survey was an efficient and effective way to find data in a short time period. Survey participants were approached by random selection to avoid inadequate data as much as possible.

Figure 1

Figure 1 shows non-athlete student males’ thoughts on how persuasive the four factors would be in the process of choosing a college to play sports at, the graph ranges from very persuasive all the way to least persuasive. The graph shows that the most persuasive factor for males would be college recruiter and the coach. The graph also shows that other athletes and friends wouldn’t be much of a factor in their decision. The importance of this data is to show that non-athlete student males’ are persuaded more by college recruiters and coaches than other factors.

Figure 2

Figure 2 shows non-athlete student females’ thoughts on how persuasive the four factors would be in the process of choosing a college to play sports at, the graph ranges from very persuasive all the way to least persuasive. The graph shows that the most persuasive factor for females is academic offerings of the school. The graph also shows that other athletes and friends would be the least persuasive factor by a large margin. The importance of this graph is to show that females tend to put academics first more often than sports.

**Analysis of Primary Research**

The results from my primary research helped prove a lot of ideas I already had on how persuasive each factor would be and also gave me some new information. Going into the survey I already had an idea that college recruiters and coaches would be a more persuasive factor in a males decision than a females decision. I also had an idea that academic offerings of the school would be a big factor in a female’s decision. Another idea that I already had is that parents would be a big factor in a female’s decision because in general females seem to look to their parents for approval in their choices more than males do. The fact that both males and females said that other athletes and friends wouldn’t be persuasive in their decision was new to me. In todays college athletic recruiting process, college recruiters and coaches will have other athletes and commits contact possible prospects by phone, social media, and many other ways to try to persuade prospects to come play with for their school.

**Discussion:**

College athletics is becoming too big. Student-athlete not athlete-student ect.

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